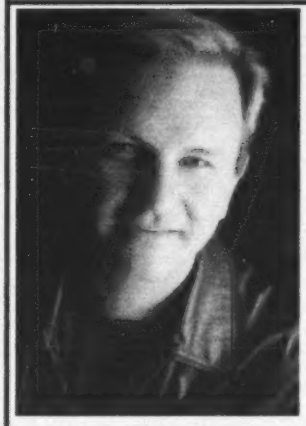
Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 14 Number 10 October 2014



Teacher, researcher, author and new Human Rights Commissioner

The Manitoba Human Rights newest commissioner Donn Short considers himself lucky because, as an academic, he gets to choose his research work.

The Commission considers itself lucky because he chose to do research in human rights, specifically on behalf of bullied youth, particularly those dealing with homophobic bullying.

Dr. Short says his goal is to affect a change in the overall climate in schools. "Not only is it important to resolve the problem of bullying in schools, but also the general climate in schools which usually renders gay kids invisible or unacknowledged," he says. "The way forward is to help teachers, parents and the community come to understand that gay rights are human rights."

Dr. Short, B.A. (Hons.); M.F.A.; J.D.; Ph.D., is the author of *Don't Be So Gay: Queers, Bullying, and Making Schools Safe*. He is the recipient of a research Fellowship from the Law Foundation of British Columbia, a Social Sciences Humanities Research Council Standard Research Grant, as well as other academic honours, awards and prizes.

At Robson Hall, he founded the group *Outlaws* and is the founding Editor-in-Chief of the *Canadian Journal of Human Rights*. He had written a number of dramatic works and is currently at work on two more books.

Dr. Short is committed to the rights of artists and is a member of PEN Canada, the Writers Union of Canada, the Playwrights Guild of Canada, the Manitoba Association of Playwrights and the Manitoba Writers Guild. He is also a member of the SSHRC-funded *Every Teacher* project being conducted in partnership with the Manitoba Teachers' Society as well as a member of the education committee of Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

The staff and Board of Commissioners welcome Donn Short.

THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection
by Azim Jiwa - Executive Director
Yesterday, today and tomorrow

Wednesday, October 22 was a tragic day in Canada. A young Honour Guard was shot and killed and shortly afterwards the man responsible opened fire in the Hall of Honour in the heart of the Canadian Parliament Buildings. Days earlier another soldier was also killed. Both of the Canadian men responsible for these deaths, died shortly after their acts of violence.

The country was steeped in shock, horror and sadness. Many wondered if now we had changed forever.

No doubt this tragedy affects us individually and as a nation, but it will be our future actions that will define us.

As the Leader of the Official Opposition Tom Mulcair eloquently put it, "We woke up this morning in a country blessed by love, diversity and peace, and tomorrow, we will do the same."

These thoughts are echoed by all our national leaders. "While today has been without question a difficult day, I have every confidence that Canadians will pull together with the kind of firm solidarity that has seen our country through many challenges," said Prime Minster Stephen Harper.

And these words by Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, "Our dedication to democracy and to the institutions we have built is the foundation of our society and a continued belief in both will guide us correctly into the future. Staying true to our values in a time of crisis will make us an example to the world."

Why repeat these thoughts? Because not only do they need to be said, they need to be heard and understood.

Some fear has been expressed that this tragedy will result in a backlash against Canadians of different ethnic origins. The Manitoba Human Rights Commission encourages the continual building of relationships among all groups within Canadian society. We are aware of the potential concerns and stand for the rights of all Manitobans.

Leaders representing the diversity of our nation are united with the rest of Canadians. As Ihsaan Gardee, the Executive Director of the National Council of Canadian Muslims said in condemning violent extremism, "an attack on one Canadian represented an attack on all Canadians."

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent.

Time to register for human rights education programs

Reasonable accommodation, mental health issues, harassment and general knowledge about Manitoba Human Rights in the workplace are all topics every employer and supervisor should be aware of in today's working environment.

Every year the Commission offers these courses to help employers and supervisors be pro-active in the workplace and ensure that the rights of their employees are understood.

There are spaces available in the November 2014 seminars. To avoid the inevitable waiting lists that will exist for the programs later in the year, now is the time to register.

For details on the programs available in Winnipeg and Brandon, the dates and cost please go to http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/workshops.html.

2014 Human Rights Awards

The deadline for submissions to recognize those individuals or groups who have contributed to human rights is fast approaching. Deadline for submissions is November 14, 2014.

If you know someone - a student -a teacher - a friend or co-worker who is deserving of recognition, please visit our website and click on Human Rights Awards 2014.

http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/hra_2014.html

A reception to honour the recipients will be held on December 9, 2014 from 5:30 - 7:30 pm.

New human rights fact sheets and guidelines now available

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission has updated its Reasonable Accommodation Guidelines. This publication is one of the most popular among the public and employers. To go hand in hand with this guideline the Commission has also issued a new fact sheet called Requesting Medical Information from Employees. Since employers are often asked to provide reasonable accommodation this quick fact sheet succinctly explains what you can and cannot ask.

Also new is a guideline on Harassment and Sexual Harassment. Although information on both these types of discrimination has been available for some time, this guideline puts everything you need to know in one publication.

To view the new facts sheets and guidelines please visit www.manitobahumanrights.ca and go to public education/ publications.

Human Rights Investigator Jesse Rock shares different strategies with a teacher for how best to educate students on human rights, The Code and protected characteristics in Manitoba.

Commission attends SAGE (Special Area Groups of Educators) 2014 Teachers Conference

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission proudly announced and opened up its registration for the 2015 DREAM Youth Conferences at the SAGE Conference on Friday, October 24, 2014.

The DREAM Conference (April 8, 2015 in Shilo and April 9, 2015 in Winnipeg) will feature Mr. Scott Heggart, with the You Can Play Project. Teachers at SAGE were excited to learn that LGBT issues will be highlighted at the annual conferences. Many commented that their schools and administration were supportive of creating safer environments.

Human Rights Investigators Jesse Rock and Pam Roberts also provided teachers with copies of the Manitoba Human Rights Teacher's Toolkit which provides resources to teachers so that they can better introduce *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba) into their classroom. This Toolkit is also available for download at www.manitobahumanrights.ca. also teachers were also informed about of the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award giving students an opportunity to be recognized for their work.

The Investigators also delivered a one hour presentation to teachers introducing The Code.

"SAGE is always an excellent conference to participate in," says Investigator and Chair of the Youth Conference Committee Pam Roberts. "Manitoba Social Studies Teachers are very interested in gathering useful resources and this is the best avenue to get information directly to the teachers."

Intake officer and Youth Conference Co-Chair retires

One of the Commission's intake officers has retired after many years of service. Lorraine Lambert left the Commission in June. Lorraine was not only an experienced intake worker, she was also instrumental in leading, planning and participating in many youth conferences over the years and co-chaired the Youth Conference Committee for seven years.

The staff wishes Lorraine all the best in her new future.